Examining the Non-Language Students' Awareness, use, and Challenges in Emi Courses in a tertiary School

Malou J. Belgira[1], Vanessa M. Epe[2], Richel L. Suan[3], Adrian V. Protacio[4]

Sultan Kudarat State University, Tacurong City, Philippines
Email: maloubelgira@sksu.edu.ph
Sultan Kudarat State University, Tacurong City, Philippines
Email: vanessaepe@sksu.edu.ph
Sultan Kudarat State University, Tacurong City, Philippines
Email: richelsuan@sksu.edu.ph
Associate Professor I, Sultan Kudarat State University, Tacurong City, Philippines
Email: adrianprotacio@sksu.edu.ph

Abstract— *English as a medium of instruction (EMI) enables learners across the world while navigating the unique challenges in the online learning environment. The study was conducted at Sultan Kudarat State University (SKSU)-College of Teacher Education to shed light on the place and role of EMI through descriptive-correlational research design. The 122 BSED students served as respondents and were selected through the probability sampling method. A validated survey questionnaire was used to identify the level of students' awareness on Executive Order No. 210 Series of 2003 section 2, the extent of use of the English language as a teacher's medium of instruction, and the challenges that students faced in using the EMI in online teaching in referenced to grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and motivation. Results showed that students were aware of Executive Order No. 210 s. 2003 and often used the EMI in online teaching and learning. English Grammar, pronunciation, motivation, and vocabulary sometimes posed challenges in online learning. It concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between the students' awareness of the EO and their use of EMI. Hence, the study recommends strengthening the use of EMI among students across programs in the institution.*

Keywords— *EO No. 210 s 2003 Section 2, Online Teaching and Learning, Challenges, EMI*

I. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease that originated in Wuhan, China, and subsequently spread globally. It is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), mainly spread among individuals during close contact, resulting in millions of deaths. COVID-19 is considered a pandemic due to its severity, causing a global health and economic crisis. The widespread outbreak of COVID-19 started in December 2019.

Lockdown activity at international, national, and local borders remains under control and is being closely observed. This pandemic is one of the most significant dilemmas people have faced since World War II (UNDP Global, 2020). The unprecedented event in human history affected almost all aspects of life, including the pursuit of quality education, yet left the educational system largely at the mercy of technology.

Cornain (2020) stresses that a new normal represents a shift in our way of living due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new normal also aligns with the teaching and learning process in the 21st century, integrating technology and modern teaching pedagogy to provide students with all the educational resources that inspire creativity, critical

thinking, communication, and collaboration (Knowingtech, 2015). Education in the new normal involves schools offering blended or purely online courses using technological products and applications, such as Google Meet, Zoom, Edmodo, Skype, Webex, AnyMeeting, Vimeo, and YouTube streaming, among others, as learning and teaching platforms available to both students and teachers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning has become one of the challenges that students and teachers face in meeting educational needs. It includes the instructional method the teachers used to deliver information, interact with students, and assess learning in a virtual environment, employing appropriate language as a medium for instruction in students' online learning.

Cabigon (2015) states that the Philippines is internationally recognized as one of the largest English-speaking countries, with at least some degree of fluency in the language for most of its population. English has long been one of the Philippines' official languages, and over 14 million Filipinos speak it. It is the language of trade and law and the primary means of educational training. English can be used for communication by stressing its importance to its students. Students in education concentrate on learner-centered instruction and are instructed to ask learners to use English to perform meaningful tasks.

Section 2 of Executive Order No. 210 series of 2003 (EO 210) on institutions of higher education, establishing the policy to strengthen the use of EMI in the educational system to ensure quality education and economic growth, specifically stated that: Higher education institutions, including State Colleges and Universities (SUCs), are now encouraged to adopt EMI at the tertiary level. The CHED shall adopt measures to promote and encourage EMI at the tertiary or higher education level.

The order encourages higher education institutions to establish an English-speaking university, regardless of the significance of non-language classes. However, problems arise from the use of the English language among students at SKSU. Inevitably, English is not employed in teaching and learning. As experienced by many students, Filipino and vernacular languages have been extensively used as media of instruction in the classroom.

Additionally, the scenario can likely lead to poor English language proficiency, a valuable and significant attribute for future teachers. The situation was aggravated as teachers and students employed online teaching through synchronous and asynchronous approaches. Hence, the problematic situation created a gap between language policies on the use of English in higher institutions and the existing communicative and instructional practices. In this

situation, the researchers believed that an empirical investigation was necessary to shed light on the role and place of EMI at SKSU.

This study addressed the following statement of the problem: (1) What is the level of awareness of non-language students of the EO 210? (2) What is the extent of using the EMI among non-language students in online teaching? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the students' level of awareness in EO 210 and the use of the EMI? (4) What is the level of challenges encountered by non-language students in using EMI in terms of grammar, pronunciation, motivation, and vocabulary?

II.   METHODS

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. A survey gathered data from 61 non-language major students. One hundred twenty-two students served as respondents, coming from the Bachelor of Secondary Education.

The survey questionnaire consisted of a five-point Likert rating scale and four parts. Part 1 of the survey instrument was formulated to gather data on the level of awareness of non-language major students of the EO 210. Part 2 focused on determining the extent to which the EMI was used among non-language students in online teaching and learning.

Furthermore, part 3 of the instrument focused on the correlational analysis between the students' level of awareness in EO 210 and the use of EMI. Consequently, part 4 of the survey questionnaire contained the indicators to gather the students' responses on the level of challenges encountered by non-language major students in using the EMI in terms of grammar, pronunciation, motivation, and vocabulary. Moreover, the data were analyzed statistically. The mean was used to analyze the descriptive data, while the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and standard deviation were used for the inferential data.

III.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data, which are presented in a tabular form, along with their interpretations and analyses.

Level of Awareness of Non-language Major Students on EO 210

As indicated, the results show that the students are aware of EO 210 (M=3.61, SD=0.96). The result is supported by the fact that the education system in the Philippines has been using EMI from elementary to university level for decades (as cited in Manalastas et al.,

2018). It is also reinforced by the notion that English is accessible and available. Additionally, it is stated that the greater one's ability to understand and use English, the better the chances of career advancement.

The respondents are fully aware of using the English language in writing all of their outputs, except when it is in a Filipino subject. The data show 4.36 as the mean of the respondents' answers, which is the highest mean rating out of the 15 questions presented.

Table 1. Level of Awareness of Non-Language Major Students on the EO 210

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1.I am aware of EO 210	3.08	Neither Aware/ Not Aware
2. I believe I have enough knowledge about EO 210	2.93	Neither Aware/ Not Aware
3. I practice following the policy of using EMI during class discussion.	3.48	Aware
4. I am concerned about the implementation of EO 210 in the University.	3.31	Neither Aware/ Not Aware
5. I participate in strengthening the implementation of the said policy.	3.36	Neither Aware/ Not Aware
6. I observed that the university encourages all students to use the English language in any office transaction.	3.67	Aware
7. Professors in the university help strengthen the implementation of English language to improve student's communicative skills.	3.93	Aware
8. I am happy using and following the EO No. 210 in the university.	3.36	Neither Aware/Not Aware
9. I am aware that EO No. 210 helps me in honing and strengthening my communication skills using the English language.	3.69	Aware
10.Sometimes I practice using the English language whenever I share my own opinion or ideas during recitation.	3.97	Aware
11. Most of the professors in the university encourages me to speak in English during recitation to exercise the EO 210	3.87	Aware
12. All our written outputs must be in English language except the outputs from Filipino subjects.	4.36	Fully Aware
13. Professors always encourage us to use the English language during debates.	3.97	Aware
14. In order to follow EO 210, I usually speak in the English language during online reporting.	3.62	Aware
15. I am well aware of all the benefits I could get from following the EO 210.	3.59	Aware
Mean	**3.61**	**Aware**

Extent of Use of EMI among Non-language Major Students in Online Teaching and Learning

The result shows that the English language is often used as a medium of instruction in online teaching and learning with a (M=3.91, SD=0.98). It can be seen in the illustration, that even if English is encouraged to utilized in the Philippine universities due to its effectiveness in tertiary education, many learners find English language learning to be a tough challenge even though the language is the most effective way of communication and expressing thought and opinions (Chen & Chang, 2004; Grigorenko, 2002 as cited in Manalastas et al, 2018). Learners had an anxious feeling when using the language, as they could be ridiculed for making a mistake (MacIntyre et al., 2002).

Researchers found that among the 15 questions presented to the respondents, Question 14 has the highest mean rating. The data shows that 4.31 is the mean of respondents who answered that *English is used in the test/quizzes*.

Table 2. Extent of Use of EMI among Non-language Major Students in Online Teaching and Learning

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1. English is employed as a medium of instruction in online classes.	3.57	Often
2. English with Filipino (Taglish or Fil-English) language is employed as a medium of instruction in online classes.	4.08	Often
3. English with Filipino and vernacular is employed as a medium of instruction in online classes.	3.38	Sometimes
4. English is used in greetings.	4.23	Always
5. English is used in checking the attendance.	4.20	Always
6. English is used in reviewing the previous lesson.	4.00	Often
7. English is used in teacher's lecture.	3.93	Often
8. English is used in online reporting.	3.93	Often
9. English is used in giving explanations.	3.80	Often
10. English is used in providing arguments.	3.89	Often
11. English is used in recitation.	3.82	Often
12. English is used in asking for clarifications/questions.	3.64	Often
13. English is used in giving assignments.	4.02	Often
14. English is used in the tests/quizzes.	4.31	Always
15. English is used in online teaching and learning.	3.89	Often
Mean	**3.91**	**Often**

Correlational Analysis between the Students' Level of Awareness in EO 210 and the Use of the EMI

Table 3. Correlational Analysis between the Students' Level of Awareness in EO 210 and the Use of the EMI

Variables	Pearson r	df.	Crit. value of r	Int.
Students' level of awareness in EO 210 and the use of EMI	0.640	59	0.250	Significant

As shown, the computed Pearson r of the two variables is 0.640. It is statistically significant, as evidenced by the fact that it exceeds the critical value of 0.250 at the 0.05 level. Hence, it implies a *significant relationship* between the students' level of awareness in section 2 of EO NO. 210 and the use of EMI. Thus, if the students are aware of EO No. 210, then they are encouraged to follow the policy, which leads them to use the English language as the medium of instruction and communication in online teaching as often as possible.

Challenges of Students in English Language Learning

Table 4. Challenges of Non-Language Students in EMI in terms of Grammar

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1. I'm afraid to speak inside the class using the English language because I feel conscious with my grammar.	3.48	Moderately challenged
2. I am hesitant to attend any student's forum on campus because I do not know how to put my ideas into words.	3.25	Slightly challenged
3. I usually used vernacular language whenever I enter some offices in the campus because I would feel my statement is ungrammatical.	3.28	Slightly challenged
4. I don't feel comfortable using the English language, both oral and written inside the class because I don't know the rules of grammar.	3.00	Slightly challenged

5. I am hesitant to suggest and ask queries concerning the lesson to my professors because I am afraid if my statement is incorrectly structured.	3.11	Slightly challenged
Mean	**3.22**	**Slightly challenged**

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the question on G1 has the highest mean rating among all indicators. The data show that 3.48 is the mean of the respondents who are afraid to speak inside the class using the English language because of grammatical concerns, with a verbal description that is *moderately challenging*. Hence, the data shows that grammar is a challenge for non-language major students.

Table 5. Challenges of Non-Language Students in EMI in terms of Pronunciation

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1. I feel anxious when speaking in English because I might mispronounce some of the words.	3.10	Slightly challenged
2. I prefer to use vernacular language because it is easier to pronounce than English words.	3.13	Slightly challenged
3. I prefer to keep silent rather than participating in some forums inside the campus because I am insecure the way other students enunciate their words	3.05	Slightly challenged
4. I feel hesitant to volunteer to read the presentation during the discussion because of the unfamiliar words that I might mispronounce.	2.56	Rarely challenged
5. I prefer to use simple English words in our recitation because I am afraid I might mispronounce those difficult ones.	3.15	Slightly challenged
Mean	**3.00**	**Slightly challenged**

The data in Table 5 illustrate the challenges students face in learning the English language, particularly in terms of pronunciation.

Based on the data presented, the question on P5, which states that students prefer to use simple English words in their recitation because they are afraid of mispronouncing the difficult ones, has the highest mean rating, with a numerical value of 3.15 and a verbal description *that is slightly challenging*. Hence, the data indicate that pronunciation is a challenge for students in the non-language major class.

Table 6. Challenges of Non-Language Students in EMI in terms of Motivation

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1. I cannot thoroughly express and share my ideas using the English language.	3.03	Slightly challenged
2. I am afraid to be called in class to speak up my opinion using the English language.	2.95	Slightly challenged
3. I used to be contented on the information from my classmates and professors, even if I have mine too, because I am afraid I would just deliver and share my learning/s inappropriately and inaccurately using the English language	2.93	Slightly challenged
4. I am not comfortable using the English language due to the chance of being ridiculed by my classmates.	2.84	Slightly challenged
5. I do not engage in changing ideas in class using English because I often feel that my ability might be downgraded by my classmates who are fluent in speaking the language.	3.00	Slightly challenged
Mean	**2.95**	**Slightly challenged**

Table 6 presents the data collected on the motivation of students in ELL. Based on the data, all indicators have verbal descriptions that are *slightly challenged*. It means that the matter of motivation is a challenge for a non-language major student's utilization of the English language in their class. Specifically, Table 7 indicates that the M1 indicator, which suggests that students struggle to express and share their ideas

effectively in the English language, has the highest mean rating of all, with a numerical value of 3.03.

Table 7. Challenges of Non-Language Students in EMI in terms of Vocabulary

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1. I feel hesitant to use English language during recitation because of my limited vocabulary.	2.87	Slightly challenged
2. Sometimes I couldn't understand some English words used by my teachers.	2.70	Slightly challenged
3. I refuse to participate in the in-class debate activity because I am afraid I cannot finish my statement due to my limited vocabulary.	2.89	Slightly challenged
4. I often do not comprehend a paragraph presentation of my professor due to some inclusion of difficult words.	2.75	Slightly challenged
5. I often mistakenly translate some English words into my native language because I thought those were the correct terms to use in the statement.	2.84	Slightly challenged
Mean	**2.81**	**Slightly challenged**

The table is similar to Table 7, which focuses on a student's challenge in ELL in terms of motivation. Based on the data, all indicators have verbal descriptions indicating *a slight challenge*. This indicates that vocabulary is *slightly challenging* for non-language major students to utilize in their English class, as observed in the total mean of the data, with a value of 2.81 and a standard deviation of 0.93.

Table 8. Summary of the Challenges Non-Language Students in EMI

Components	Mean	Rank
Grammar	3.22	1
Pronunciation	3.00	2
Motivation	2.95	3
Vocabulary	2.81	4

The data indicate that *grammar* is ranked as the first challenge for non-language primary class students' utilization of the English language in their learning, with *a mean of 3.22*. It is followed by the *pronunciation (m = 3.00)*, which ranks second among the data. Then, it is followed by *motivation,* which has a *mean value of 2.95*. It is considered the third rank among all indicators and followed by vocabulary, the fourth rank with a *mean value of 2.81*.

IV. CONCLUSION

Generally, this study aimed to examine the role of EMI in online teaching at Sultan Kudarat State University, College of Teacher Education, and is limited to non-language major third-year students. Based on the findings, the following conclusions were formulated:

The non–language students of the College of Teacher Education are aware of EO 210; The English language is often used as a medium of instruction, as well as Filipino and vernacular languages, in online teaching and learning at Sultan Kudarat State University; there is a significant relationship between EO 210. The use of EMI in online education has become prevalent, and students are generally more conscious of their grammar when using EMI within the university.

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